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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH ARGENTINE OPPOSITION SENATOR  
REF: BUENOS AIRES 0587

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The Ambassador met June 6 with Argentine Senator Maria Eugenia Estenssoro, prominent leader of the opposition Civic Coalition (CC). Estenssoro offered her critical view of how the GOA was managing the ongoing agricultural strike. In connection with congressional consideration of new broadcast media legislation, she requested information on the U.S. regulatory framework for media companies, and the Ambassador undertook to have the Embassy provide relevant research. She briefed the Ambassador on her work with the International Women's Forum (IWF), and they spoke of the need for more educational and cultural exchanges between Argentina and the United States, and programs underway to facilitate broader access, such as the recently announced Sarmiento Mann scholarships. End summary.

#### Academic and Professional Ties to the U.S.

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¶2. (SBU) Senator Maria Eugenia Estenssoro called on the Ambassador June 6. Estenssoro described for the Ambassador her transition from a career in journalism to working in civil society, ending up in politics, where she is now a prominent activist in the Argentine opposition Civic Coalition (CC) led by Elisa Carrio. After studying journalism at Smith College, Columbia and Harvard universities, she was "TIME" magazine's correspondent in Buenos Aires before moving to Argentine newsmagazine "Noticias." She served as executive director of "Endeavor," an NGO promoting the development of small business and entrepreneurship with a model that she claimed was developed in Argentina and later replicated elsewhere around the world.

#### Opposition Views on the Farming Crisis

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¶3. (SBU) Estenssoro expressed sympathy for the agricultural sector and its ongoing protest of what she described as the exorbitant increase in export duties announced March 11. She said she was concerned by the Kirchner administration's confrontational and divisive approach to the ongoing farmer strike, particularly the GOA's refusal to negotiate. She acknowledged that the opposition and the Congress had been marginalized in the dispute. Estenssoro, who just started her first Senate term in December 2007, said she was frustrated that the Kirchner-dominated Congress was exceedingly limited and had relinquished the capacity to play a useful role in ending the crisis. She noted that she and other opposition leaders had introduced in the Senate on March 28 a bill that would have withdrawn the increase on agricultural export duties, but the bill was spiked by the Senate leadership.

¶4. (SBU) In response to a question from the Ambassador, Estenssoro said the prolongation of the agricultural crisis, growing anxiety about inflation, and the incipient economic downturn would likely bolster the opposition's chances in the 2009 mid-term congressional elections. She acknowledged, however, that the opposition remained divided, and that the Kirchners and their allies "understood power" and were capable of outmaneuvering the opposition despite the unfavorable circumstances.

#### Request for Information on U.S. Broadcast Policy

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15. (SBU) Estenssoro, a member of the Senate Committee on Media and Freedom of Speech, said she was very interested in vetting GOA proposals for new broadcasting legislation (reftel). She requested information on the U.S. regulatory framework for media companies, particularly on how the USG is dealing with triple play and convergence issues (she mentioned telephone, television, cable, internet provides, utilities, content producers), and anti-trust provisions. She was interested in learning more about the FCC, its legal authority, principles, and how it grants licenses. She said she was interested in how markets were delineated, and what she called "incompatibility" restrictions (on ownership of multiple media outlets in a single market). The Ambassador undertook to have the Embassy's Information Resource Center (IRC) gather information responding to her areas of interest.

#### Women's Network

16. (SBU) Estenssoro briefed the Ambassador on her work as president of the Argentine affiliate of the International Women's Forum (IWF), which hosted in May a gathering of 500 IWF members from around the world, active in business, politics, academia and culture. The Ambassador and Estenssoro also spoke of the need for more educational and cultural exchanges between Argentina and the United States, and programs underway to facilitate broader access, such as the recently announced Sarmiento Mann scholarships. She also expressed interest in arranging a DVC for herself and her congressional colleagues on these issues.

#### Biographic information:

17. (SBU) Estenssoro is currently serving her first term as a National Senator, representing the City of Buenos Aires for the Civic Coalition (CC). Estenssoro defines herself ideologically as "progressive-liberal." Before taking her Senate seat in December 2007, Estenssoro served in the Buenos Aires City Legislature for the 2003-2007 term. Prior to that, she had won a seat in Congress as National Deputy for the center-right led by former Economy Minister Domingo Cavallo, but she declined to take her seat over ideological disagreements with party leaders.

18. (SBU) As a journalist, Estenssoro worked in Buenos Aires in the 1980s for "TIME" magazine, and for Argentine newsweekly "Noticias" in the 1990s. Estenssoro was Executive Director of Endeavor Argentina from 1998 to 2000 (she is still member of its Directive Board), and was a member of the International Board of Transparency International from 1999 to 2001. She has served on the Administrative Council of NGO "Citizen Power" ("Poder Ciudadano"), in the Political Action Network (RAP), and is President of the Argentine Chapter of the International Women's Forum.

19. (SBU) Estenssoro received a bachelor's in literature from Smith College, and did graduate work in journalism at Columbia and Harvard universities. She has also studied at the Sorbonne. Estenssoro, born in 1960, is single and has three children: Blas (19), Gaspar (17) and Francisca (14). She was born in Bolivia, to a well-known political family, and moved to Buenos Aires at the age of four. Her great-grandfather is credited with discovering oil in Bolivia and her grandfather founded the Bolivian national oil company, YPF. Her family also includes two former Presidents of Bolivia, Victor Paz Estenssoro and Hugo Banzer. Her father, "Pepe" Estenssoro, was a businessman who specialized in petroleum and worked in the privatization of YPF during former President Menem's times.

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